



PETER & ELIZABETH TOWER FOUNDATION

2021 Grant Guidelines

Strengthening Partner Capacity

The Tower Foundation supports organizations through funding from three portfolios: (1) Programs & Services, (2) Community Change, and (3) Strengthening Partner Capacity. In 2021, the Foundation will accept requests for funding from each of these portfolios in two funding cycles. Preliminary applications for the two cycles will be accepted by April 7 and August 18, respectively. Because challenges relating to the COVID-19 pandemic are very much still with us in 2021, the Foundation will offer an additional round of COVID-19 Response Grants. Please see the [COVID-19 Response Grant Guidelines](#) for more information.

This document outlines the Strengthening Partner Capacity grant guidelines, including how the Foundation defines capacity building, the types of projects the Foundation will consider in this portfolio, applicant eligibility requirements, how to submit a request through the online portal, an overview of what's involved in applying for a grant, and the 2021 submission dates.

What is Capacity Building?

The Foundation recognizes the importance of strong organizational infrastructure for delivering high-quality programming and promoting organizational sustainability. Capacity building can strengthen an organization's systems and competencies or support the growth of external networks and relationships that strengthen a community or field. Under this portfolio, we invite applications for small capital requests; for work that builds staff skills and expertise; for leadership development; for technology infrastructure; for organizational and program planning; and for building strategic partnerships. Recognizing that cash flow has been an even greater challenge than usual through the COVID-19 pandemic, the Foundation will also consider modest bridge funding for organizations that can demonstrate commitment to future funding from another source (e.g., contract or grant).

What Populations Does the Foundation Serve?

Young people age 0-26 affected by:			
Intellectual Disabilities	Learning Disabilities	Mental Illness	Substance Use Disorders

The Foundation will give preference to applicants that focus on serving members of the above groups **who also** experience further inequities as people of color; refugees and immigrants; people experiencing homelessness; people who are incarcerated; LGBTQ+ people; and people with disabilities.

The Foundation believes that organizations reflecting the diversity of the communities they serve in their own leadership, governance, and workforce are better suited to serve those communities. **New to the application in 2021 will be a short form asking you to identify the racial/ethnic composition of your**

executive director(s), board of directors, staff, and people served. This form can be previewed on page six of this document.

The greater the overlap between the population(s) that your organization serves and the populations of interest to the Foundation, the more competitive your request is likely to be. Please be sure to review the population definitions on the following pages to ensure organizational alignment with the Foundation's interests before developing your request. When in doubt, call or email us.

What Types of Projects Will the Foundation Consider?

The following are types of capacity building requests that the Foundation will consider through this grant program:

1. **Small capital project or equipment** requiring a one-time (i.e., non-recurring) purchase.
2. **Organizational development**, including strategic planning, business plan development, board development, diversity, equity, and inclusion strategy, evaluation, and continuous improvement activities.
3. **Program planning** to support the development of a program or strategic partnership (**not** the implementation of the program).
4. Organizational **professional development** (e.g., evidence-based practices training and implementation, diversity, equity and inclusion).
5. **Convenings and network- or field-building events** that align with the Foundation's focus areas (the Foundation will not consider event sponsorships).
6. **Mergers and affiliations.**
7. **Technology planning and equipment purchases** to support an organization's back-office needs (technology used by staff rather than by clients). See page five (5) for more information.
8. **Bridge grants** that fill a gap in funding until guaranteed/committed funds arrive (evidence of committed funds must be included with your grant request).

Requests may include more than one capacity building project type, so long as they are logically related.

The Tower Foundation allows organizations to apply an **administrative overhead rate** of 20% for requests of \$100,000 or less. The administrative overhead rate for colleges, universities, and affiliated organizations is capped at 10%.

Who Can Apply for a Grant?

Organizations providing services to one or more of the populations the Tower Foundation serves (see sidebars) within the following regions are eligible to apply for Tower Foundation grants:

An **Intellectual disability** is a disability characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior, which covers many everyday social and practical skills. This disability originates before the age of 18. Intellectual functioning refers to general mental capacity, such as learning, reasoning, and problem solving.

Adaptive behavior comprises three skill types:

1. Conceptual skills (e.g., language and literacy; money; time; number concepts; self-direction)
2. Social skills (e.g., interpersonal skills, social responsibility; self-esteem, gullibility, naïveté, social problem-solving; ability to follow rules/obey laws and avoid being victimized)
3. Practical skills (e.g., personal care, occupational skills; healthcare; travel/transportation; schedules/routines; safety use of money use of telephone).

American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, 2011

Substance use disorders

occur when the recurrent use of alcohol and/or drugs causes clinically and functionally significant impairment, such as health problems, disability, and failure to meet major responsibilities at work, school, or home.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Massachusetts	New York
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnstable County • Dukes County • Essex County • Nantucket County 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Erie County • Niagara County

Additionally, applicants must be:

- not-for-profit organizations with a 501(c)(3) designation that are not private foundations, or
- not-for-profit public benefit corporations, or
- public or diocesan school districts, or
- private or charter schools.

While organizations may have more than one active Tower Foundation grant at any given time, the Foundation may give preference to organizations that have not received a grant award recently.

If the Foundation declines a funding request, your organization may reapply as soon as the following cycle. Please note that your organization **may only submit one request** across all of the Tower Foundation’s funding opportunities in any given cycle.

How Much Funding is Available?

The Foundation anticipates allocating a total of \$400,000 for its 2021 Capacity Building Grants program, with \$200,000 allocated to each of the three grant cycles. The maximum grant award is \$40,000.

What Won’t the Foundation Fund?

The Foundation does not fund programs or projects that:

- provide private benefits for any grant recipient or affiliated person,
- attempt to influence legislation or intervene in any political campaign,
- contribute to capital campaigns,
- consist of scholarships, services, or treatment for specific individuals.

If you have questions about whether or not your organization or project idea would be a fit, we encourage you to contact a Tower Foundation Program Officer prior to building out your grant request. You can email the Foundation at info@thetowerfoundation.org or schedule a 30-minute call with a Program Officer here at <https://towerfdn.link/30-min-call>

How Does My Organization Apply for a Grant?

All grant requests must be submitted through the Foundation’s online portal. The Foundation is moving to a new grants portal beginning in 2021. We expect the new portal to be ready no later than March 15, 2021, though we anticipate launching it earlier in March.

To ensure that requests are submitted on time, applicants are encouraged to create an account in the online portal at least **one week prior** to the

A **learning disability** is a lifelong condition which interferes with the ability to learn. It is a neurological disorder that affects the ability of the brain to process, store and respond to information. There are different types of learning disabilities that can affect different areas of processing, such as learning to read, reading comprehension, writing and spelling, organizing written and spoken language, mathematical operations, decision making, and the development of fine motor skills. Individuals with LD may be particularly gifted in other skills and are typically of normal intelligence.

American Association for Pediatric Ophthalmology and Strabismus

Mental illness includes medical conditions that disrupt a person's thinking, feeling, mood, ability to relate to others and daily functioning. Just as diabetes is a disorder of the pancreas, mental illnesses are medical conditions that often result in a diminished capacity for coping with the ordinary demands of life.

Serious mental illnesses include major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and borderline personality disorder.

National Alliance on Mental Illness

preliminary grant request deadline. The Foundation cannot guarantee that registration requests submitted later than these dates will be processed in time for the application deadline.

What’s Involved in Applying for a Grant?

In addition to basic organizational information and a brief summary, organizations will be asked to respond to four questions: (1) What do you want to do? (2) Why do you want to do it? (3) How do you want to do it? (4) What do you need to do it? Specific to Strengthening Partner Capacity grants, organizations will also be asked to briefly describe the impact your project will have on your organization, network, or field.

Applicants will be asked to provide a budget, along with quotes for any single items or services exceeding \$1,000.

Some applicants will receive a grant award or decline following the initial submission of this request without any additional follow-up from the Foundation. The Foundation will contact other applicants for clarification or more information as the request warrants.

For additional guidance, and to access the Strengthening Partner Capacity application questions in their entirety, log in to the Tower Foundation online portal. An application preview is also available on our website on the “Apply for a Grant” page.

When Can I Apply?

2021 Grant Application Cycles and Time Line

	April	August
Applicants Create Online Portal Accounts	March 30	August 11
Preliminary Grant Requests Due	April 7	August 18
Clarification Calls/Emails Sent	April 29-May 10	September 9-20
Proposal Decisions Sent	June 30	November 16

Preliminary grant requests must be received by 11:59:59 p.m. on the stated deadline. Requests submitted after the deadline will be considered during the next cycle.

How Do I Get in Touch with the Foundation If I Have More Questions?

If you have questions about the Foundation’s Strengthening Partner Capacity grant guidelines, please contact us. You can send us an email at info@thetowerfoundation.org or schedule a 30-minute phone call with a Program Officer at <https://towerfdn.link/30-min-call>

Accommodations

The Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation is committed to making its guidelines and applications accessible to all. Please contact us at info@thetowerfoundation.org or 716-689-0370 to make accessibility arrangements (e.g., submissions via alternative media, text-to-speech software licenses, transcription).

Notice for Prospective Applicants

By submitting this proposal to the Foundation, you, as the applicant or its duly authorized representative, hereby agree and consent that the Foundation may disclose to any employee, trustee or professional representative of the Foundation, or to other potential funding sources or their representatives for possible collaboration, this proposal and all supporting materials which have been or will be submitted in connection therewith, including but not limited to the applicant’s grant request.

Tips for Technology Requests

Although the Foundation has ended its formal Technology Initiative, it still considers technology planning and implementation grant requests as part of the Strengthening Partner Capacity grants program. The following are tips for developing a request to the Tower Foundation focused on planning or implementation support of new technology for your organization.

Please note that a technology plan must be in place at an organization before a request for funds to purchase technology will be considered.

Technology Planning

The Tower Foundation will entertain requests for costs associated with hiring an outside technology consultant to assist with developing a technology plan. Grant funds will be used for outside consultants to:

- conduct a comprehensive hardware and software inventory;
- develop a technology needs assessment; and
- produce a technology plan that makes explicit reference to the organization's strategic or business plan.

Technology Implementation

The Tower Foundation will support costs associated with purchasing equipment, software, training, and services necessary for implementing the agency's technology plan.

The following are not allowed as part of this request:

- developing custom software applications or web-based information portals
- advanced information technology training (e.g., certifications)
- software licensing or subscriptions to cloud-based services beyond the first year of implementation
- service/maintenance contracts beyond the first year of implementation

2021 Diversity Form Preview

New to all 2021 applications to the Tower Foundation, regardless of grant opportunity, is a short form asking you to identify the racial/ethnic composition of your executive director(s), staff, board of directors, and people served. The Foundation will also give preference to organizations that reflect the communities they serve.

The Peter & Elizabeth Tower Foundation is working to incorporate a deliberate diversity-equity-inclusion (DEI) lens in its grantmaking practice. To help the Foundation understand more about the organizations and beneficiaries it supports, we are asking grant applicants to provide us with a better sense of how your organization’s leadership, workforce, and governance reflect DEI. The Foundation will give preference to applications from organizations led by people of color and/or people with disabilities and that reflect the communities they serve. **No organization will be excluded from consideration solely because it is not led by people of color and/or people with disabilities.**

The Foundation recognizes that DEI extends beyond race and disability. We have chosen to focus on these two characteristics in light of our focus on serving people with intellectual disabilities and learning disabilities, and in explicitly recognizing the profound inequities created as a product of a culture and institutions imbued with systemic racism.

1. Does your organization currently collect demographic data about:

	Yes	No
Staff		
Board of Directors		
People Served		

2. If your organization collects demographic data, please enter the number of individuals of each race/ethnicity for each role in the chart below to give us a sense of your organization’s racial and ethnic diversity. (Continue to the next question if your organization does not collect this information.) For “People Served,” please consider those served in the last fiscal or calendar year.

Race/Ethnicity (Please enter numbers for each)	Executive Director(s)	Staff (excluding Executive Director)	Board of Directors	People Served
African American/Black				
American Indian/Alaskan Native				
Asian				
Hispanic/Latina/ Latino				
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander				
White				
Biracial/ Multiracial				
Total #				

3. Is your organization led by a person with a disclosed disability? Yes No
4. What additional information about your organization’s diversity and inclusion practices would you like to share?